

Leader: This year's Hajj should be disavowal of Israel, its supporters



Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei this year's Hajj rituals should be a disavowal of the Israeli regime and its supporters. Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks in a Monday meeting with Iranian officials in charge of Hajj pilgrimage affairs and people who will travel to Saudi Arabia's holy cities of Mecca and Medina to perform the annual

rituals. Ayatollah Khamenei said that the Hajj rituals this year should be held beyond annual ceremonies in the light of the verses of the Holy Qur'an and the memory of the blessed Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH). He underlined that the rituals should be a disavowal of the Zionist criminal enemy of Muslims and its supporters. The Leader said the Israeli regime's savage attacks in the Gaza Strip and the resistance of the people of Palestine are clear signs showing the way forward. Ayatollah Khamenei said the strange and huge developments that are underway in Gaza, which have revealed the true face of the "vampire" created from within the

Western civilization, will be recorded for posterity. "These are not issues of interest for today and these days, but rather, they will remain in history," he said. The "Zionist regime" would not have dared to carry out its barbaric acts against Palestinians if it were not for the United States' support, Ayatollah Khamenei emphasized. The Leader said it is not possible to behave kindly toward someone who is complicit in or supports a murder. He also said that Iran has not waited and will never wait for others, but the firm support of Muslim countries and nations will stop the continuation of the lamentable situation of the Palestinian people.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei speaking during a meeting with Iranian officials in charge of Hajj pilgrimage affairs and people who will travel to Saudi Arabia for Hajj rituals in Tehran on May 6, 2024. [khamenei.ir](#)

Raisi to Barzani: Don't allow Israel, anti-Iran elements abuse Iraq soil

International Desk

Iranian president urged governments in Iraq and the country's Kurdistan Region not to allow the elements of the Israeli regime and anti-revolutionary groups to abuse the Arab country's soil against Iran. Ebrahim Raisi made the remarks in a meeting with visiting President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq Nechirvan Barzani in Tehran on Monday. The Iranian president appreciated Baghdad and Erbil for "full and precise" implementation of a bilateral security agreement signed between the two sides. He said that the complete disarmament and uprooting anti-revolutionary elements in Iraqi territory is a necessity. Back in 2023, Tehran and Baghdad signed a security agreement encompassing coordination in protecting



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the shared border. Under the agreement, the Iraqi government has promised to disarm terrorist and separatist groups based in the Kurdistan region, vacate their military barracks, and transfer them to the camps established by the Baghdad government. In January, Iran launched a missile strike at a main espionage center of the Israel's Mossad spy agency in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region. The attack totally destroyed the Mossad center there. During the Monday meeting, Raisi also expressed

hope that Barzani's trip would be a turning point in improving the level of political, security, economic and cultural relations between the two sides. "We consider the long border between the two sides as a valuable opportunity to improve the level of relations, but security is the essential foundation of any kind of cooperation and expansion of interactions." Barzani also held a separate meeting with the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Hamas: Rafah offensive will not be 'picnic' for Israeli forces

International Desk

Hamas resistance group said on Monday that any ground operation in Rafah will not be a "picnic" for Israeli forces, as concerns mount over a possible offensive in the city. "Our valiant resistance, led by Al-Qassam Brigades, is fully prepared to defend our people," the group said, referring to its armed wing. The movement also called on the international community to take urgent action to stop Israel's planned incursion, saying it threatens the lives of hundreds of thousands of defenseless civilians, including children, women and the elderly. Israel's military ordered some 100,000 Palestinians on Monday to begin evacuating from Rafah, signaling that a long-promised ground invasion there could be imminent and further complicating efforts to broker a cease-fire in Gaza. The looming operation in the city - where more than 1 million Palestinians are sheltering and a high number of deaths is feared - has raised global alarm and Israeli's closest allies have warned against it. On Monday, the United Nations agency serving Palestinian refugees said it would not comply with the evacuation order. Israel has described Rafah as the last significant Hamas stronghold after some seven months of war, and has repeatedly said the invasion is necessary to defeat the resistance group. The evacuation call followed intensified disagreement between Israel and Hamas during the weekend cease-fire talks in Egypt to end the seven-month war. Consultations between two other mediators, the United States and Qatar, were ex-



AFP

pected on Monday in Doha but state-linked media in Egypt said negotiations had stalled after the rocket strike killed four Israeli soldiers. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to send ground troops in against Hamas fighters in Rafah regardless of any truce, and despite concerns from countries and aid groups.

'Unacceptable' evacuation

EU foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell on Monday called the evacuation orders "unacceptable". They "portend the worst: more war and famine", he said, urging Israel to "renounce" the ground offensive. The French Foreign Ministry said it was "strongly opposed" to an offensive on Rafah. Jean-Raphael Poitou, Middle East coordinator for the Action Against Hunger charity, told AFP that the areas now opened for evacuees had previously been "closed because they were considered dangerous". Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' spokesperson Nabil Abu Rudeineh said, "The occupation authorities have actually begun preparing to commit the greatest crime of genocide by invading Rafah."

US backs Israel
"The American adminis-

tration, which provides financial and military support to the occupation and stands against the international community to prevent the implementation of international legitimacy resolutions and the cessation of aggression, is the (one) that encourages Netanyahu and his leaders to continue their massacres against the Palestinian people." In a statement, the Israeli military ordered the residents in the city's eastern zone to move to the "expanded humanitarian area" at Al-Mawasi on Gaza's nearby coast. The area "includes field hospitals, tents and increased amounts of food, water, medication and additional supplies," it said. Soon after the war started on October 7, Israel told Palestinians living in northern Gaza to move to "safe zones" in the south - including Rafah near the Egyptian border. Rafah is home to more than 1.5 million displaced Palestinians, who have taken refuge from the war launched by Israel following a Hamas attack last Oct. 7 that killed nearly 1,200 people. Since then, the Israeli onslaught has killed more than 34,600 Palestinians, mostly women and children, besides causing a humanitarian catastrophe.

Saudi-Israel deal...

Therefore, if Saudi Arabia were truly intent on normalization in the present circumstances, it might have refrained from putting such a condition forward - namely, recognition of an independent Palestinian state. By making this demand public, it aims to send a signal to the US to shift its pressure from Riyadh to Tel Aviv, while also aligning with Saudi public sentiment and showing solidarity with the Palestinian people. It could also be seen as an assessment of the current state of affairs within the Muslim world. The atrocities committed by Israel in Gaza have galvanized further anti-Israel sentiment in the Muslim world, making any form of engagement with Israel highly unpopular. Even states previously apathetic toward the Palestinian cause are now compelled to fall in line with their society's sentiments following the Israeli aggression on Gaza, as evidenced by the Turkish government reluctantly suspending economic ties with Israel. Netanyahu's cabinet greenlit a ground assault on Rafah yesterday, a move that would significantly escalate the already complex situation. Therefore, public opinion within countries that once had deals with Israel is now calling for a severing of ties. In such a climate, no leader in the Arab or Islamic sphere is willing to take the gamble of normalizing relations with Israel. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia has additional conditions for normalization that are proving hard pills for the US and Israel to swallow.